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Viewing cable 09NICOSIA96, CYPRIOTS STILL WEIGHING OPTIONS ON MONCHEGORSK

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- The middle box contains the header information that is associated with the cable. It includes information about the receiver(s) as well as a general subject.
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| Reference ID | Created | Released | Classification | Origin |
|-----------------------------|----------------------------------|----------------------------------|------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| 09NICOSIA96 | 2009-02-02 16:31 | 2011-08-30 01:44 | CONFIDENTIAL | Embassy Nicosia |

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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 NICOSIA 000096

SIPDIS

E.O.12958: DECL: 02/02/2019

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SUBJECT: CYPRIOTS STILL WEIGHING OPTIONS ON MONCHEGORSK

REFERENCE: NICOSIA 79 AND OTHERS

Classified by AMB Urbancic, reasons 1.4 B and D.

¶1. (C) Status of Ship: M/V Monchegorsk remains at anchorage in Limassol, although the Embassy has received reports it might have moved slightly owing to traffic conditions in the port area. Cypriot maritime officials are conducting a more-thorough inspection of 50-plus crates onboard the vessel. According to MFA sources, they have not/not checked the remaining 40-plus crates, which are inaccessible unless the Monchegorsk moves pier-side.

¶2. (C) Diplomatic Activity: French Ambassador Nicolas Galey on February 2 hosted a strategy session with his U.S., British, and German counterparts. Galey briefed regarding his latest Monchegorsk-related communications with MFA Permanent Secretary (D-equivalent) Nicolas Emiliou and Presidential Diplomatic Coordinator Leonidas Pantelides. RoC maritime officials continued to inspect the 98 crates on board the vessel, Galey relayed, "with much to look at and little staff to do the work." The inspectors did not have the means to check 40-plus containers without off-loading the entire cargo at pier-side (which the Cypriots continue to oppose.)

¶3. (C) Much of the deliberations on the Monchegorsk had shifted to New York, Galey noted, with the Cypriot UN Permrep having informed his UK and French counterparts that Cyprus intended to report the results of the inspection to the Iran Sanctions Committee and ask the Committee what actions to take. Locally, Galey felt it most important to ensure the P-3 and like-minded nations were speaking from the same page, and raised the necessity of getting European Union leaders more involved, especially HighRep Javier Solana. German Ambassador Gottfried Zeitz briefed that "the Six" (the EU-3 plus others) were set to meet in Frankfurt on February 3 to discuss Iran; Zeitz believed that Solana would attend, so this forum seemed natural to discuss the Monchegorsk.

¶4. (C) Zeitz repeated an offer he earlier had made to the RoC (under instructions) for carte blanche assistance on the Monchegorsk matter; such aid could comprise sending technical experts from Berlin or even dispatching a vessel that could remove the cargo from Cypriot territory. Ambassadors agreed this offer provided the RoC a "way out" of its current predicament, should it choose to accept it.

¶5. (C) British High Commissioner Peter Millett raised the need to ensure that the Cypriots' report to Sanctions Committee did not spawn unproductive bickering in New York. He envisioned three possibilities in its drafting: 1/ Cypriots simply report facts of vessel inspection (with a violation of 1747 implied); 2/ Cypriots report facts and request a Committee determination vis-a-vis a violation; and 3/ Cypriots report facts, request Committee determination as well as marching orders on how to dispose. Option 1 was preferred by all, in order to prevent lengthy delays in disposition. The French ambassador offered, after reading UNSCR 1701, that the Committee ought to be asking Cyprus how it wished to proceed, not vice-versa. Ambassador Urbancic recommended that we also let the RoC know that the Six should have an idea of what the RoC would say before the report was actually sent to the Sanctions Committee. Ambassadors agreed to convey local P-3 thinking and repeat Germany's assistance offer to MFA's Emiliou; Millett will telephone the MFA diplomat and later share his response with the others.

¶6. (C) Also on February 2, Polchief called on MFA Middle East Desk Officer Dionysius Dionysiou and Russian Deputy Chief of Mission Alexander Shcherbakov. Regarding the recent visit of the Syrian envoy to lobby for the Monchegorsk's release (Reftels), Dionysiou, who had accompanied former RoC Foreign Minister Erato Marcoullis on the RoC's last official visit to Damascus in late 2007, assumed the Syrian had played hardball. They felt they had Cyprus in a corner, emboldened by the RoC recently having broken EU consensus to support (vice abstain) a UNGA resolution on the Golan Heights. No end-state other than an RoC decision to let the vessel proceed to Latakia would satisfy the SARG, Dionysiou predicted. Should that not occur, the Syrians would look to upgrade further their relations with the breakaway "Turkish Republic of Northern Cyprus", and lobby hard on the "TRNC's" behalf within the OIC.

¶7. (C) Dionysiou also debunked Emiliou's assertion that MFA lawyers were questioning 1747's application on conventional (vice nuclear) arms. "OP 5 is clear-cut here," he claimed. Nonetheless, having participated in the EU's drafting of the amended (in 2007) common position that followed 1747's passage, he claimed there remained plenty of constructive ambiguity in the UN text.

¶8. (C) Shcherbakov claimed that Russia, at least locally, was taking a

relatively hands-off position on the Monchegorsk. UNSCRs 1747 and 1803 prescribed flag state responsibilities and "liabilities," he claimed, but mandated nothing for owners (Monchegorsk's are Russian); as such, Cyprus was responsible for handling this incident. Press reports that alleged Moscow was pressuring Nicosia to allow the vessel free passage to Syria were bunk, he claimed. Rather, Russia had recommended that Cyprus complete its inspection, send the results to the UN committee, and act on its recommendations. Shcherbakov expected to receive a copy of the Cypriots' findings no later than February 3.

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